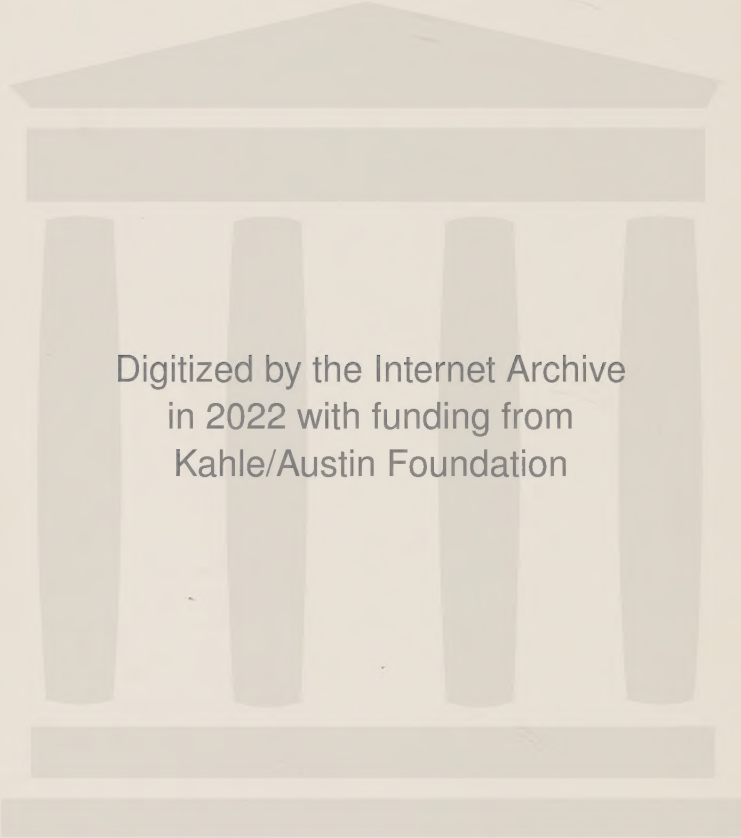


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Early American **Kitchen Antiques** **Book No. 2**

by Don and Carol Raycraft





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Early American **Kitchen Antiques**

Volume II

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Front Cover Photo: Assortment of Kitchen related items in iron,
wood and stoneware

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IN 1966 THE authors wrote an article dealing with candle-molds for a national publication. In the article we cited the work of the late Mary Earle Gould of Worcester, Massachusetts. Several weeks after the article appeared we received a letter from Miss Gould commenting favorably on what we had written. This began a series of letters that added immeasurably to our knowledge and appreciation of early American kitchen antiques.

Miss Gould's classic book, **Early American Wooden Ware**, was initially published in 1942 and has been the standard reference book on this subject since. When Miss Gould began putting her collection together in 1932, she did not face the difficulties encountered by collectors today. In the early 1930s the American antiques market had not yet discovered the type of early iron, tin, and woodenware that Miss Gould was buying from attics, barns, and wayside stands.

Today, collectors face the task of distinguishing between European imports, reproductions, and the rapidly diminishing supply of authentic early American antiques. Many of the early pieces that have survived were subjected to refinishing processes that separated them from the paint or patina that had been built up over many years of use and abuse.

Miss Gould's collection was incredible in its size and quality and was also largely in its original condition. The bowls, butter scales, iron, and tinware had not been refinished or polished to a new luster that they previously had not possessed.

Approximately a year before her death, she sent the authors a series of pictures of her collection with her signature and an explanation of each on the back. Plates 1-6 contain these rare photographs of what was, perhaps, the finest private collection of early American kitchen antiques ever assembled.



Plate 1. Collection of toddy sticks, chopping knives, bowls, and tubs.



Plate 2. Collection of iron pots, trivets, trammels, and broilers.



Plate 3. Collection of early boxes.

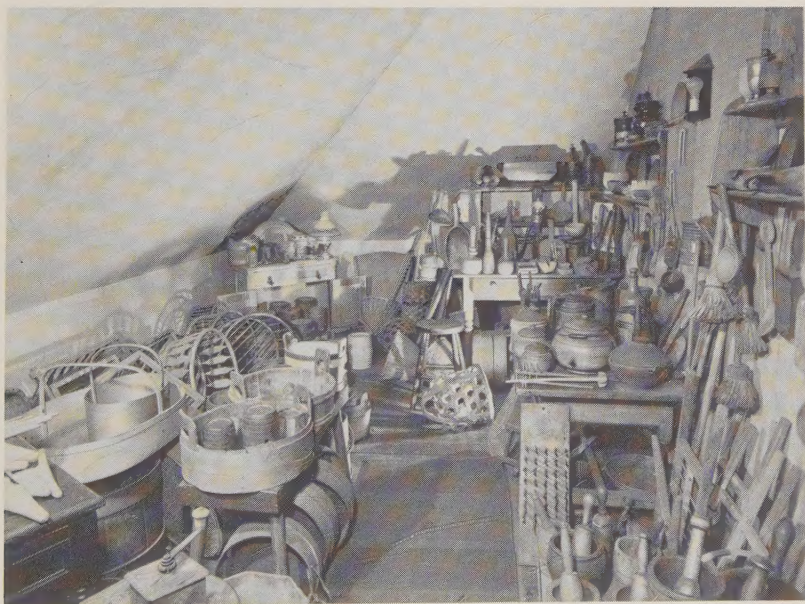


Plate 4. Collection of woodenware.

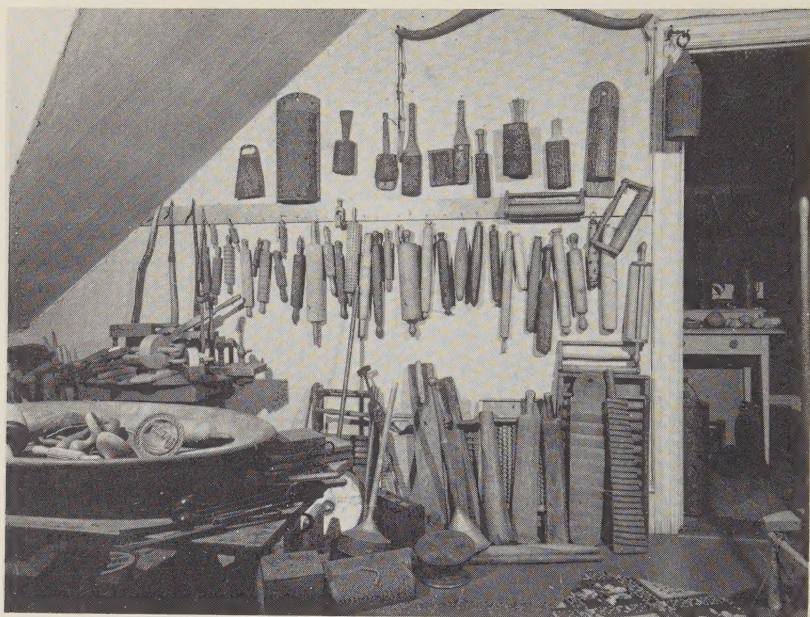


Plate 5. Collections of food graters, scrubbing sticks, rolling pins.



Plate 6. Large oval pig platter, feather baskets, butter scales, and rare butter prints.



Bucket bench and mid-nineteenth century stoneware from New York state and New England.



MOLDS IN a wide variety of sizes and textures were a significant part of the early American kitchen. The oval, cast-iron molds were used in the baking of a cake or cookie in a process similar to that used in producing crepes or waffles. The iron molds were heated in a bake oven or on a stove top and batter was poured onto the hot mold. The iron molds were made at the Albany-Troy Foundry in New York State between 1750 and 1850.

The rectangular cookie mold of cherry is dated 1843 and initialed I.M. The walnut cake board (upper left) has an unusual cornucopia design carved into its surface. It is signed, M. Watkins, New York. The board can be attributed to J. Conger a wood-carver and designer who created the State of New York coat of arms. Watkins served as a wholesaler for much of Conger's work.

The two additional wooden molds are springerle boards. They produced a delightful and intricate design of animals, flowers, or fruits on a sugar cookie.

In recent years iron molds, cookie and cake boards, and springerle boards have been mass-produced for sale in shops catering to tourists and to stores that feature gourmet kitchen-ware. Many have made their way into antiques shops and are being sold as early examples.

Plate 7. Variety of early kitchen molds from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



GOULD, IN her **Early American Woodenware**, described a similar selection of pantry boxes as colonist boxes. These examples provide an interesting cross-section from the late 1700s and early 1800s.

The open bucket with locked-lapped lid was made by the Watervliet, New York, Shakers. Watervliet, one of the earliest Shaker colonies, was begun in the late 1700s.

The colonist box in green paint and the three boxes without paint are representative of many that are mislabeled as Shaker. They are excellent early pantry boxes used for storing a variety of kitchen ingredients, but they are not Shaker. Once a collector has studied a nest of Shaker oval boxes or a single box, the differences between colonist and Shaker construction are readily apparent.

Plate 8. Collection of early boxes and buckets from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



THIS IS A collection of pantry or colonist boxes that appear to be in their original paint. Prices have increased dramatically in recent years and the supply of boxes in reasonably good repair has diminished significantly. Perhaps the rarest of country antiques are the everyday items that were considered the easiest to throw away in the 1700s and early 1800s.

Boxes of this type were disposed of if they were partially crushed, cracked, or otherwise damaged. The green box with two finger laps, at left, is also of a type often described as Shaker. Once again, it is not a Shaker box.

Plate 9. Assortment of early colonist or pantry boxes.



THE LARGE oval box with three finger laps is Shaker. Compare it to the painted colonist box above it. The differences are obvious even though both boxes were constructed with copper nails. Copper nails were used by the Shakers because they did not rust over the years and discolor the wood.

Shaker boxes are impossible to date accurately because they were constructed with the same techniques and precision from the late 1700s until well into the twentieth century. The top and bottom of the Shaker box are pine and the sides are maple.

The green berry bucket and the rectangular basket are both Shaker. The Shakers characteristically used a diamond-shaped piece of iron to strengthen the handle where it was attached to the sides of the staved bucket.

Miniature baskets are difficult to find and expensive to buy. The early example, at left, with the hickory handle dates from the early 1800s.

Plate 10. Shaker boxes, baskets, and berry bucket.



INCLUDED in this assortment of kitchen utensils are a brass skimmer, tin skimmer, many ladles, toasting forks, marrow scoops, batter whipper, wire potato boiling basket, cabbage slicing board, a tin bird cookie cutter, and a cottage cheese mold.

The observant reader will note a unique tool that appears to be a pair of bowed legs. This device was used to measure the interior and exterior dimensions of a variety of small wooden food and liquid containers.

Plate 11. Kitchen utensils from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



NOT TOO many miles from the chopping table upon which this project is being written is an apple orchard we habitually visit each fall to get more than our fill of freshly pressed cider.

The demand for apples was equally great in colonial America. The problem of separating the apple from its peel was a major difficulty for one attempting to produce many pies in a limited period of time. To speed up the process, a mechanically inclined gourmet invented an apple peeler that was immediately popular.

The four examples illustrated in Plate 12 all date from the 1700s. The apple peeler with the hardwood gears is, perhaps, the most interesting of the four.

In the late 1800s and into the early 1900s Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery and Ward marketed cast-iron apple peelers in the kitchenwares section of their catalogues that were designed for attaching to tabletops. The later and much more common mass-produced peelers contain little of the appeal of the handcrafted wooden peelers.

Plate 12. Early apple peelers from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



RARELY do the collectors of early country antiques have the opportunity to see an eighteenth century table setting. The wooden plates or trenchers were turned on a spring pole lathe in the mid-1700s. The spoon on the trencher is made of burl. Burl is a wartlike growth found on maple, ash, and walnut trees. It is unusually hard and so was ideal for bowls and other kitchen tools that were exposed to much abuse.

The table service includes a fork, spoon, and knife of wood. The handled wooden noggins were used as drinking vessels and as measures. They were made in standard sizes and were especially popular in taverns. The noggins date from 1825-1850.

In the center of the trestle table is an uncommon oyster brazier. The oysters were heated by the attached whale oil font.

The color of early woodenware provides great insight into the origin and approximate date of the pieces. Trenchers, noggins, spoons and other early pieces seldom were scrubbed clean with water. Typically, they were cleaned with pumice or rottenstone.

Plate 13. Early table setting from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



IN RECENT years there has been an influx of skillfully reproduced and aged household items of the early 1800s that appear to be genuine, even to the serious collectors.

The tin quilting stencil in the shape of a bird is a classic reproduction that the authors purchased for \$35 in 1974. We bought it from a respected dealer who had purchased several tin stencils at a New Hampshire antiques show. She was reluctant to sell any of the stencils because of their uniqueness, but eventually relented and sold us three different designs.

Later we read an article in the **Ohio Antiques Review** that reported that a number of collectors had been duped by these stencils which had been cut from a small segment of an early tin roof and then carefully fashioned into a bird with tin snips.

The dough trough is made of cherry and dates from the late 1700s. This piece is enhanced by the wide dovetailing at the corners and the milk base paint.

Butter molds and stamps became very popular in the mid-1800s. The vast majority of the stamps and molds were made from maple. The bird stamp is an uncommon example that was machine made about 1870. The wood was steamed and the design was mechanically imprinted onto the surface of the lathe-turned stamp.

Plate 14. Reproduction quilt stencil, painted dough trough, and rare butter stamp.



IN THE YEARS immediately preceeding the American Revolution candles were heavily taxed by King George III and Parliament. Homemakers of the period were forced by economic necessity to produce their own candles in pottery, tin, and pewter molds.

The unusual mold in the pine frame consists of 24 individual tubes of redware made at the Bloomfield Pottery in the early 1840s. The miniature tin molds were utilized to make candles for "hog scraper" candlesticks similar to those illustrated.

The candle dipping and drying rack in the foreground dates from the mid-1700s and was used in the tedious process of gradually building up tallow or beeswax on one of thirty-six wicks that could be hung from the rack. The wicks were attached to the rods and then carefully dipped into a caldron of wax many times until the candle was formed. It was critical that the temperature of the wax in the caldron be constantly monitored before each dipping so that it didn't melt the wax already built up on the wicks.

Plate 15. Early lighting from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



THE FOOTED tin candlemold and the twelve-tube circular mold are also rare forms of early lighting. An article on tin-smithing in an **Antiques Magazine** from the mid-1920s tells of an Ohio craftsman who found himself with an abundance of tin pie plates for which he could find no buyer. Allegedly, he used his excess plates as the bottom and top for some uncommon twelve-tube candlemolds that he quickly sold. The owners have fervently talked themselves into believing this is one of those molds.

The miniature candlemold was used for making candles that decorated Christmas trees in the mid-1800s. The pierced tin foot warmer is an unusually large example of a device used to provide some comfort in drafty early homes and chilly church pews. Hot coals were stored in a tin bowl that was placed inside the pierced foot warmer.

The factory-made fly shield was a common sight in Victorian American kitchens. Fly shields are found in a wide assortment of sizes with the majority dating from 1870-1900.

Plate 16. Unusual tin candlemolds and foot warmer.



THE VARIETY of wooden kitchen antiques in Plate 17 is from the extensive collection of Dr. and Mrs. Gene Greenberg of Champaign, Illinois.

The factory-made breadboard was produced in the late 1800s and, quite possibly, was sold by an early catalog store. Circular breadboards were used at the table and often were decorated with a short verse or prayer. The boards were sold with a matching knife with a wooden handle that had a few words or "bread" stamped into it.

The knives are much more difficult to find than the breadboards. Like most factory-made bowls, spoons, butter workers, and potato mashers produced between 1865 and 1920, the breadboard is made of maple.

The maple lemon squeezer (bottom right) is an excellent piece of woodenware from the eighteenth century. The halved lemon was separated from its juice with pressure from a strong left arm and the squeezer. A later, hinged lemon squeezer is found in Plate 18.

The toddy sticks are a special part of the Greenberg collection. They were used to stir a popular drink in the 1700s that was laced with rum, sweetened, and served hot.

Plate 17. Woodenware from the Greenberg collection. (Photograph by Dr. Roberto Manson.)



IN RECENT years there has been a reawakening among collectors to the beauty and value of original finishes on furniture and woodenware. A cupboard that has been stripped of its paint, sanded, and sealed with a lustrous new plastic finish loses much of its value and all of its desirability in the eyes of many collectors.

The wooden pitcher or noggin was shaped from a single block of wood on a lathe and dates from the early 1800s. Noggins were made to size and were popular in country inns for serving spirits in portions of one to five cups. Noggins, unlike tankards, did not have lids.

The circular collar or bowl with the pegs extending from its sides is a rare cheese drainer. Cheesecloth was stretched over the pegs and the bottom of the bowl and served as a strainer to separate the cheese curds from the whey. The whey was disposed of and the curds were tied up in the cheesecloth to drain further. The whey was often added to powdered clays to serve as a binder to hold homemade paint together.

The unusual circular wooden colander with a multitude of holes was used to drain freshly cooked vegetables prior to serving. It dates from the 1700s.

Plate 18. Early noggin, cheese collar, and colander from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



THE VAST majority of American baskets available today to collectors are constructed of oak, hickory, or ash split. Split baskets are found in a staggering variety of forms and are almost impossible to date accurately.

The unusual basket form on legs is made of walnut split and probably dates from the early 1800s. It was used for storing and drying wool used in spinning cloth. the inset handles on the side allowed it to be easily transported and the six legs elevated the basket and speeded the drying process of the wool.

Inside the walnut split basket is a variety of buttocks baskets that were used for carrying small amounts of produce. Buttocks baskets were made throughout the Midwest and eastern United States from the early 1800s until well into the 1900s with little change in design, construction, or function.

Like other early kitchen antiques, baskets should be left in their original finish as much as possible. Applying shellac or a shiny finish to a basket certainly does not add to its marketability or value.

Plate 19. Collection of early baskets.



THE SPLIT cheese or curd basket (bottom left) with the hexagon weave is among the most sought after of early forms by collectors. This basket served the same function in separating curds and whey as did the cheese collar in Plate 18. They are found in a variety of sizes ranging up to 24" in diameter.

The plaited utility basket with two handles was useful for carrying small parcels. The large Shaker field basket with the tightly woven split is an uncommon form.

Shaker baskets are recognized by the quality of their craftsmanship and the simplicity of their design. Often, they appear to be quite fragile in construction, yet they can carry heavy loads.

Plate 20. Assortment of early baskets.



IN EARLY American homes much of the furniture was designed to perform several tasks. The pine chair-table in old paint is just such an example. The country or frontier homes of the early 1800s were small by today's standards. The few changes of clothes that an individual possessed were stored in a single chest or hung from a hook on the back of a door. Closets and wardrobes were unknown in most early homes. A chair-table gave its owner a place to sit when it was not in use as a resting place for dinner dishes, food, and elbows.

The three kettles provide an interesting contrast. The large "gypsy" kettle dates from the mid-1800s and is fairly uncommon. The iron kettle on small legs is a much later, mass-produced example that is typical of many that show up in antiques shops. It was made in the early 1900s. The third kettle is representative of many iron pieces that appear to be earlier than they probably are. The influx in recent years of large quantities of iron fireplace utensils and cooking kettles from Mexico, Portugal, Spain, and eastern Europe has created havoc among collectors of American antiques. This small kettle is probably not American though its value would be enhanced if it could be proved to be native in origin.

Plate 21. Early chair-table and iron kettles.



BUCKET benches, like this one of walnut and pine, had an important place in the history of American washdays. They were integral parts of early homes and generally resided outside the rear door or on a porch. They were designed to hold washday utensils such as buckets, brushes, rags, and home grown soap.

The Grapenuts, cinnamon, candy, Faulkner Nosegay, and tobacco tins are representative of hundreds of similar tins that decorated shelves of turn-of-the-century general stores and pantries.

The two molded stoneware salt crocks are also products of the early 1900s. At that late date in the development of America stoneware most of the decoration was applied by stencil or machine. Hand-decorated stoneware such as the deep, cobalt blue, flower crock from White's Pottery, Utica, New York, had vanished from the scene by 1900. Mounting expenses and the industrialization of the glass industry had destroyed the market for stoneware, and potters could not afford the labor expense involved in extensively hand-decorating their products.

Plate 22. Bucket bench, late stoneware, and advertising tins.



THE MUSTARD painted corner cupboard with sixteen “lights” or individual panes of poured glass holds an outstanding collection of American pewter and butter prints.

The past decade has seen a resurgence, beyond the small cult of earlier collectors, of appreciation for country furniture in old paint.

When country furniture first came into popularity in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the style was to strip away the original finish and proudly display the warm pine underneath a century of paint and patina. Many of these pieces that lost their paint fifty years ago are having the “original” paint replaced to meet the new demands of the changing antiques market.

The butter prints, all of which are hand carved rather than machine stamped, include rare elliptical and rectangular forms. Prints containing designs of animals, birds, unusual flowers, or scenes such as a cow jumping over a half moon are especially uncommon.

Plate 23. Early cupboard, American pewter, and butter prints. From the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



LARGE fireplaces similar to this one in the Rookery, Deposit, New York, were found in the fire or common rooms of large homes or taverns. They were used for heat, light, cooking, and as a gathering place for conversations about revolution and crops.

The Rookery fireplace is a reconstruction of the original eighteenth century fireplace that was removed in 1864. It is typical New York State construction of the late eighteenth century. The fieldstone used in the fireplace weighs over ten tons. It is ten feet wide at the base, eight feet deep, and has a chimney height of forty feet. The firebox measures five and one-half feet by six feet by four and one-half feet. It is filled with hearth utensils, cranes, skewer holders, iron and wooden peels, and trammels.

Resting on the lintel are a variety of early lighting devices, a noggin, and several unusual pieces of tinware.

Plate 24. Collection of Mr. Richard S. Axtell.



THE DINING room of Mr. and Mrs. Steve Wagner of Newburgh, New York contains a rare hanging chandelier of wood and tin, a pair of painted ladder-back side chairs from the eighteenth century, and an early step-back cupboard.

The harvest table has a scrub top and grained sides and legs. Graining was commonly used in the early 1800s on country furniture constructed of softwoods. The purpose was to give the piece an appearance of being made of a more expensive hardwood such as walnut or oak.

Plate 25. Chairs, cupboard, early table from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Steve Wagner.



THE KITCHEN of the Wagner's restored saltbox contains a scrub top tavern table with original paint, Hepplewhite legs, an overlapping drawer, and breadboard ends. A breadboard end is an additional, thin strip of wood attached to the table to prevent the warping of the one or two board top.

The bow-backed Windsor chairs and unusual, open top, pine cupboard are both rare examples of early country furniture.

The brass wedding ring candlestick on the table, stoneware pottery, Iroquois basket with potato stamp decoration, and maple mortar and pestle are the type of accessories critical to the decoration of an early American home.

Plate 26. Kitchen of the Wagner home.



THE NEW YORK State fieldstone home of Dr. and Mrs. Dan Olson displays some outstanding early kitchen antiques. In addition to a working fireplace and beehive oven, there is an eighteenth century chair-table and two exceptional Windsor side chairs.

The magnificent coverlet is dated February 14, 1823 and carries an American eagle and capital motif. It is also signed by its maker.

The painted keeler on the table was used at milking time to allow the warm milk to cool. Keelers are shallow, staved, and bound with hickory hoops. Perhaps, their most distinguishing characteristics are the handles that are an extension of the staves.

The heavily decorated stoneware jug with the deer is a product of the Bennington, Vermont pottery. In the late 1960s and early 1970s cobalt decorated stoneware increased in value, significantly. In the mid-1970s soaring price tags began to level off on the more common pieces. Examples of the quality of the deer jug will continue to increase in value because of the detail of the scene portrayed.

Plate 27. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Dan Olson.



THE FOUR shelf bucket bench in early paint holds an Iroquois basket with potato stamp decoration, a tole cannister, an early Clarks and Crolius crock with incised flowers, a burl bowl, and a redware storage jar. On the windowsill is a Bennington bird crock.

The pine harvest table in old paint dates from the early 1800s. The two Windsor armchairs are American and have their original finish. The chair at right is a fanback and the chair at left is also a fanback with an uncommon additional rung or brace connected to an extension of the seat. The chairs date circa 1750-1770.

Plate 28. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Dan Olson.



THE IRON skewer holder (at right) and the four skewers were invaluable cooking aids in colonial America. Meat was fastened to a spit by carefully plunging several skewers through the meat and into small holes in the sides of the spit. The skewer holder was hung from the lintel or mantel on the fireplace in easy reach of the country chef.

In the foreground is a rare fish broiler that was used with individual fish impaled on each of the long, slender spikes. It also dates from the 1700s.

Plate 29. Early cooking tools from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.



A COLLECTION of items from early home laundries and a trade sign from a late 1800s commercial laundry are illustrated in Plate 30. Washboards may be found in iron, pottery, glass, and a variety of woods. The cast-iron board dates from the mid-1800s. The wood framed board with the ribbed stoneware surface was made by the Clark and Crolius Pottery of Manhattan Wells, New York.

On the early bucket bench are a flatiron, a rolling scrubber, wash sticks, a scrub stick, a fluting iron, an early soap dish with tab handle, and a goffering iron. The fluting iron and the earlier goffering iron were used in preparing ruffled shirts and skirts for wear by fashionable ladies and gentlemen of the nineteenth century.

Plate 30. Early laundry items from the collection of Richard S. Axtell.

